



South Western Regional Library Services CIO

Eighty Seventh Annual Report

1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

SWRLS CIO

C/O Arts University Plymouth

Tavistock Place

PLYMOUTH

Devon, PL4 8AT

www.swrls.org.uk

Charity Registration Number: 1176414

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• **1. Objectives, Activities and Public Benefit Statement**

The Trustees are pleased to present their Annual Report and financial statements of the charity for the period from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The **charity's objects** are:

1. The advancement of education for the benefit of the public by:

- a. Promoting cross sector co-operation between members.
- b. Promoting access to library collections and specialist knowledge.
- c. Providing a framework for the inter-lending of materials.
- d. Advancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce and their stakeholders.
- e. Facilitating a collaborative network to share best practice and excellence.

2. The advancement of literature, knowledge and lifelong learning for the benefit of the public by promoting:

- a. Access to specialist resources.
- b. Cultural activities and partnerships.
- c. Access to data and information.

The Trustees confirm that they have taken into account the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

Examples of the work carried out in the period covered by this report are highlighted in section 3, Achievements and Performance.

• 2. Chair's Comments



I am now in my second year as SWRLS Chair, having been a long-standing board member previously. I am thankful to the board of trustees and to members for all their invaluable experience and expertise and dedication to libraries. I remain thankful also to Heather Norman-Soderlind, the SWRLS Coordinator until March 2024, who did a thorough handover to the new coordinator, Shelley Trower. Shelley has experience especially of university libraries with a background as an academic as well as of public libraries as lead for funded projects including '[Living Libraries](#)', and we have already developed a strong working relationship for the benefit of SWRLS and its members. We have continued to meet online as a committee and to communicate via the monthly newsletter and website; developed new training opportunities; awarded funding for a new partnership project and a training grant; and organised a Members' Day and AGM event so far.

Looking back now to the year of this report, March 2023-April 2024:

Our annual Members Day took place on Tuesday 13th June at Exeter Library and online, with guest speaker Bill Thomson, BBC Head of Public Value Research, advising on digital archiving and access in the library environment. It was well attended with 44 participants signing up on Eventbrite, and for those who were not able to attend, the recording exists on the website.

The AGM took place online on Thursday 30th November, where we shared our 4-year strategy SWRLS@90, and heard from those who gained SWRLS grants that year. Again it was well attended with 40 signed up to come along. Though snow fell on the South West that day, resulting in the closure of schools and businesses, those that attended engaged in thought provoking dialogue supporting the wider profession and roles of those in attendance.

Having secured an Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant in December 2022, SWRLS as a charitable organisation worked in partnership with South West literature development agency Literature Works to deliver Word Live in Libraries: a tour of author talks and creative workshops that ran throughout 2023, incorporating 22-library based venues around the South West. These were designed to engage a variety of communities that might be less familiar with libraries, including young people and new arrivals. Outcomes have included four inspirational posters to help advocate for libraries: <https://www.swrls.org.uk/post/why-libraries-matter> (more below).

Another major project was SWRLS-funded 'Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries', which began in February 2023 to collaborate between libraries across the sector to support library services to meet the particular cultural needs of those new to Devon and Cornwall. The project succeeded in recruiting project partners and members of a discussion forum launched on Basecamp, and a valuable bank of resources shared across the project is now available. An impact report was delivered in December 2023:

<https://www.swrls.org.uk/post/peninsula-of-sanctuary-project-report>. SWRLS is looking to support this project now entering a second phase.

As we remain in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis, SWRLS endeavours to ensure value for money. We have continued to freeze subscription fees, and to offer grants to promote best practice and innovation within libraries and the wider sector. We welcome applications to our grants programme from across our membership, particularly projects which support health and wellbeing or reduce financial inequalities. Looking ahead, in 2024-2025 we seek to further develop training and networking opportunities, and to support new projects

Donna Gundry, Chair

• 3. Achievements and Performance

2023-2024 is the final year of our SWRLS Strategic Plan 2021-2024, agreed in consultation with our membership at the 2020 AGM. Updates on the implementation of the Plan have been provided for Board of Trustees meetings with the Plan being reviewed at least twice a year. The new strategic plan is being launched in November 2024.

This year presented SWRLS and the library sector we serve with continuing challenges not least as a result of cuts and cost of living rises. Our Board of Trustees agreed to keep membership fees static for 2023-24.

1. Co-operative working and partnerships

Networking opportunities:

Our July 2023 Members Day was held both online and in-person at Exeter Library, as outlined in the Chair's report above.

The AGM was held online in November, where we shared our 4-year strategy SWRLS@90, and heard from those who gained SWRLS grants that year: Laura Lay (FX Plus Library Lead) talked about the Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries project; Melita Armitage (Consultant for Bath Spa University Lead) talked about Re-Imagining Libraries; and Christina Evans (Somerset Library) about the Thermal Imaging Cameras Project.

2. Developing the workforce.

SWRLS Training Offer

SWRLS offered a series of workforce training opportunities to members including:

- Managing Projects in the library and information environment – a half-day online webinar – ran for a second and third time in April 2023 to meet demand.
- Equality, Equity & Diversity in the Libraries & Information Environment was a half-day online training event led by John Vincent that ran in May 2023.
- The AI Revolution: Empowering Librarians to Navigate the Future was a two-hour online webinar led by Phil Bradley in October 2023 and February 2024.

The training offer remains strong, for example including since April:

- Library Provision for Blind & Partially Sighted Customers - SWRLS offered this free half-day online training event led by Laura Marshall, Library Engagement Manager for RNIB, in April 2024.
- Neurodiversity in Libraries – SWRLS offered this half-day online training event twice to SWRLS members with no charge, in July and October 2024.
- LGBTQ+ online workshop: Developing inclusive library provision – SWRLS offered this half-day workshop to SWRLS members with no charge in October 2024.

3. Supporting the cultural and community engagement role of libraries

SWRLS Grants

Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries: responding to a need to support increasing numbers of new arrivals and refugees to the South West region, and reflecting the highly dispersed and rural nature of our region, SWRLS member FX Plus Library applied for a SWRLS grant to organize a close collaboration between libraries across the sector in support of great library service to meet the particular needs of new arrivals to Devon and Cornwall. An impact report was delivered in December 2023: <https://www.swrls.org.uk/post/peninsula-of-sanctuary-project-report>.

Re-Imagining Libraries: Bath: Bath Spa University, in partnership with University of Bath, Bath & North East Somerset Libraries, Bath College and House of Imagination, received a grant to develop an inclusive consultation methodology to identify how libraries can engage with the changing needs of local communities.

Individual Training Grant: Somerset NHS Foundation Trust: SWRLS approved a small grant to Veronica Price to attend the LILAC conference in Cambridge, sharing her report via a subsequent news blog.

Arts Council England

Word Live in Libraries: a region wide tour of SW libraries: following a commitment by SWRLS board of Trustees to award a small grant to match-fund an application to Arts Council England's

National Lottery Project Grant programme, we raised £29,000 from ACE towards delivering a tour of authors from diverse cultural backgrounds to twenty two libraries across the sector and our region, each designed to engage a particular audience ranging from new arrivals to young people to the Chinese diaspora. Workshops and talks were held in person and as hybrid or online only events. The tour went live in 2023-24, beginning with Luke Palmer’s creative writing workshop at Bath Central Library in February, and finishing with Noreen Masaud’s in conversation event at UWE Library in November. SWRLS is working in partnership with Literature Works, the South West’s regional literature development agency. Outcomes include a mini-film about the tour: www.swrls.org.uk/post/word-live-in-libraries-the-film, and four inspirational posters to help advocate for libraries: www.swrls.org.uk/post/why-libraries-matter.



Imagery developed for ACE-funded SWRLS Word Live in Libraries Tour

4. Effective Governance

There were no Trustee positions up for re-election this year. Trustees were proposed and seconded for a further term, including Donna Gundry as Chair, Simonetta Taylor as Secretary, and Merryn Kent as Treasurer.

Board meetings: The Board met four times, in June, September, November, and February.

5. Marketing and advocacy:

- **Website:** the SWRLS website at www.swrls.org.uk is continually refreshed with news, events and (new this year) project information.
- **Social media:** @SWRLSInfo is regularly fed with news updates, job opportunities.

- **SWRLS CIO Newsletter:** the e-newsletter is designed to keep members apprised of current opportunities and progress with SWRLS programme of project and training events and is published monthly.

We continue to seek innovative and informative methods of communication with our SWRLS membership.

• 4. Honorary Treasurer's Report

Management

The trustees have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed. The Board is confident that review services have been established to mitigate those risks and that we had sufficient cover in the 2023/2024 financial year.

Financial review

The Coordinator and Trustees continue to monitor the charity's income from membership fees and training, and its expenditure. This ensures that SWRLS provides a service that is value for money for all members and all sectors.

Supporting vulnerable service users remains a priority for many of our members, and SWRLS has been pleased to offer financial support to the Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries project.

At the end of the 2023/2024 financial year, our reserves stood at £87,030. This included £74,575 held in a Charities Deposit Fund. While it is prudent to keep several months of running costs in reserve, it is important that excess funds are used for the benefit of members rather than being kept on deposit. At a board meeting in January 2023, the trustees agreed to set aside £25,000 as designated funds for three years from April 2023/24 specifically to support grant applications that focus on supporting good health and wellbeing, or on reducing financial inequalities. We look forward to receiving further grant applications that focus on these issues, whether collaborative partnerships or from individual institutions.

SWRLS is keen to do what it can to mitigate the financial restraints everyone is under so, as always, the board welcomes suggestions about any support or training we could offer. We also welcome grant submission from all sectors and from individuals. If you have any feedback on the way funds are spent, whether positive or as a critical friend, please feel free to contact me or any member of the board so that the work of SWRLS continues to reflect the priorities of its members.

Thanks to all those who supported me in the role of Treasurer over the past year.

Merryn Kent
Honorary Treasurer

• 5. Structure, Governance and Management

SWRLS is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and is governed by the Constitution and Rules, agreed in 2017. These set out the appointment process for the Trustees as follows:

- Trustees (officers and ordinary trustees) are nominated and elected by SWRLS CIO members. Members are circulated with invitations to nominate prior to the AGM advising them of retiring trustees and requesting nominations;
- At every AGM, one third of the Honorary Officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and one third of each category of Ordinary Trustee (public libraries; academic, special and other libraries; independent) shall retire from office;
- The trustees shall, from within their number, elect a Vice Chair;
- The Board of Trustees may co-opt to any subsequent vacancies, until the next AGM;
- Trustees can serve three consecutive terms;
- There must be at least 5 trustees, with the maximum number being 12.

The Coordinator is an *ex-officio* member of the Board of Trustees, but is not a trustee.

Member Organisations: SWRLS is proud of its cross-sectoral membership across the region. In 2023-24 the following organisations were members:

Bath & North East Somerset

Bath and North East Somerset Libraries and Information; Bath Spa University; University of Bath

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

AECC University College; Arts University Bournemouth; BCP Libraries; University of Bournemouth

Bristol

Bristol City Council Libraries; Bristol Grammar School; University of Bristol; University of the West of England

Cornwall

Cornwall College; Cornwall Council Libraries; Cornwall Health Library; Falmouth University

Devon

Devon Libraries; Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust; University of Exeter; Exeter Cathedral & Archives

Dorset

Dorset Libraries

Gloucestershire

Cirencester Sixth Form College; Gloucestershire County Council Libraries & Information; Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; Hartpury University; University of Gloucestershire

Guernsey

Guille-Allès Library

Hampshire

Hampshire Healthcare Library
Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust

Jersey

Jersey Library

North Somerset

North Somerset Health Care Library (NHS); North Somerset Library Service

Plymouth

Arts University Plymouth; Plymouth Library Services; Plymouth Marjon University; University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust; University of Plymouth

Somerset

Bridgwater and Taunton College; Downside School, Radstock; Somerset Libraries & Information Service; Strode College; Yeovil College, Somerset NHS Hospitals Trust

South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College; South Gloucestershire Library and Information Service

Southampton

Southampton City Council Libraries

Swindon

New College, Swindon; Science Museum Library and Archives at Wroughton; Swindon Borough Council Libraries

Torbay

Torbay Libraries

Wiltshire

Wiltshire Libraries

Representatives on other regional bodies:

CILIP South West Members Network

Inspire, Libraries in Cornwall

Read South West Executive

Libraries Connected South West

South West Higher Education Libraries (SWHELs)

Donna Gundry, Mike Hosking

Merryn Kent

Merryn Kent

Emma Wellard

Jackie Chelin

• 6. Reference and Administrative Information

Registered Charity 1176414

Registered Office Arts University Plymouth
Tavistock Place
Plymouth
Devon, PL4 8AT

Bankers Royal Bank of Scotland
Direct Business Banking
PO Box 5479
1 Springfields Square
Manchester, M61 0NH

Trustees: trustees serve to the AGM in November in any given year, unless otherwise stated:

- **Officers:**
 - **Chair:** Donna Gundry, to serve to Jan 2026
 - **Secretary:** Simonetta Taylor, to serve to Nov 2025
 - **Treasurer:** Merryn Kent, to serve to Nov 2024
- **Ordinary Trustees:**
 - **Academic, special and other libraries:**
 - Jolanta Peters, to serve to 2024
 - Jackie Chelin, to serve to 2024
 - **Public libraries:**
 - Emma Wellard, to serve to Jan 2025
 - Frances Tout, to serve to 2024
 - **Non sector specific (independent):**
 - Helen Chaloner, to serve to 2024
 - Michael Hosking, to serve to Jan 2026

Coordinator: Shelley Trower is an *ex-officio* member of the Board of Trustees, but is not a Trustee.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

D Gundry

Chair of Trustees
5 November 2024

Independent examiners report to the Trustees of South Western Regional Library Services CIO

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts for South Western Regional Library Services CIO ("the charity") for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the 2011 Act; or
2. the accounts do not comply with these records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Michelle Ferris BSc (Hons) FCA DChA

Albert Goodman LLP
Chartered Accountants
Goodwood House
Blackbrook Park Avenue
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2PX

Date: 6 November 2024

Receipts and payments accounts

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For the period from	01/04/2023	To	31/03/2024
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Interest Received	3,458	-	-	3,458	1,214
Member subscription	17,144	-	-	17,144	22,995
Training Courses	446	-	-	446	1,541
Word Live in Libraries project	-	6,786	-	6,786	26,900
Contribution	213	-	-	213	-
Other Income	25	-	-	25	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	21,286	6,786	-	28,072	52,650
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	21,286	6,786	-	28,072	52,650
A3 Payments					
Coordinator Support Post	14,753	-	-	14,753	15,714
Training & Development	2,675	-	-	2,675	5,399
Conference & Meeting Fees (AGM & Members day)	896	-	-	896	659
Committee / Meeting Exepnses	555	-	-	555	-
Website / Internet	1,939	-	-	1,939	1,523
Subscription Payments	-	-	-	-	350
Independent Examiner Report	1,320	-	-	1,320	1,200
Insurance	227	-	-	227	256
Academic Book Return Scheme	-	-	-	-	200
World Live in Libraries Project	2,082	32,046	-	34,128	-
Grant / award Payments	199	-	-	199	14,673
Office Support Services	12,960	-	-	12,960	6,480
Sub total	37,606	32,046	-	69,652	46,454
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	37,606	32,046	-	69,652	46,454
Net of receipts/(payments)	(16,320)	25,260	-	41,580	6,196
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	103,350	25,260	-	128,610	122,414
Cash funds this year end	87,030	-	-	87,030	128,610

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current Account	12,455	-	-
	Deposit Account	74,575	-	-
			-	-
	Total cash funds	87,030	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities	Unrestricted	1,236	
Accountancy Fees	Unrestricted	1,875	
Grants owed	Unrestricted	60	
Website costs	Unrestricted	959	
Conference expenses	Unrestricted	1,325	
World Live in Libraries Project costs			

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
D Gundry	DONNA GUNDRY	05/11/2024

Notes forming part of the financial statements

1. The accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis and in accordance with guidance issued by the Charity Commission.

During 2023/24 the decision was taken to prepare accounts on the receipts and payments basis and therefore the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023, shown as comparatives in this years accounts, have been restated to the receipts and payments basis.

2. Neither the trustees, nor any person connected with them, have received any remuneration or expenses during the year (2023: None).
3. The funds of the charity are as noted on the receipts and payments accounts, with £nil restricted funds carried forward as at 31 March 2024 (2023: £25,260).

Within unrestricted funds is £25,000 of designated funds (2023: £25,000).

4. The Trustees confirm, in accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012, that at year end the CIO did not have any outstanding guarantees to third parties nor any debts secured on assets of the CIO.
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